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GREEK AND LATIN IN THE HIGHER SCHOOLS OF GERMANY

I.

"THE classical literature is, and will continue to be, the source of all our culture. It must remain, therefore, not only an indispensable, but by far the most important, study in our higher schools." This thought, expressed a century ago by Friedrich Gedike, the first *Oberschulrat* of Prussia, has been the guiding principle of the *Gymnasien* to the present time. Through Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller the German mind was made ready for humanistic training. The ideals of the new humanism were embodied by Friedrich August Wolf in his *Science of Archæology* — a science which included not only the classical languages and literatures, but all that was concerned in the civilizations of Greece and Rome. Its highest aim was "the knowledge of the classical humanity itself." In Wolf's *Seminar* in Halle the men were trained, "who, in the higher schools, universities, and educational councils of a great part of Germany and of Switzerland exerted an unparalleled influence upon the subsequent development of the higher culture."

The influence of Wolf and his school, powerful as it was, was insufficient to preserve the spirit of the new movement from violence at the hands of those who were determined to nation-

alize the school system and make a knowledge of Greek and Latin the condition of admission to the learned professions and to all positions of honor in the civil service. That classical study should serve other ends than those of pure culture was a proposition abhorrent to the new humanists. Gesner, the founder of the movement at Göttingen, considered Latin and Greek quite unnecessary for the ordinary trades and professions and for civil and military service. Gedike based his hopes of true educational reform on the conversion of all so-called Latin schools in the smaller cities into genuine *Realschulen*, and the reception into the *Gymnasien* only of such pupils as were destined to become learned men. Even Wolf held that the classics were valuable only to the learned; Latin should not be required of candidates in medicine, and Greek should be obligatory only for gymnasial teachers and students of theology.

The place of the ancient languages in the curriculum of the German schools during the greater part of this century has been determined by the shifting of opinions between these two extremes—between that view which makes the study of the classics purely a formal discipline and that other view which bases the worth of such study on the acquisition of humanistic culture, on contact with “the best thoughts of the best men of antiquity.” In the one case it is considered of equal value as a means of preparation for all trades and professions dependent on intellectual acumen; in the other case it is of worth only for those who can practically apply the technical knowledge thereby acquired, or who may have sufficient leisure to enjoy its æsthetic qualities. It is a question of making the ancient literature a means to an end or an end in itself.

With the introduction of the state system of education the courses of study of all schools fitting for the universities became practically uniform. The reforms were carried out by men friendly to the humanistic party, but they encountered strong opposition. Not only were a majority of the classical teachers unable or unwilling to follow the new ideals, but a considerable

party in the state was barbarous enough to think that what the nation most needed was an education capable of producing more patriotic citizens. The Napoleonic wars were a rude shock to Goethe's universal *Humanitätsideal*, and gave decided impetus to all reactionary influences. The gymnasial programme of 1816 put much emphasis on mathematics to the disadvantage of Latin, which was reduced to seventy-six week-hours in a ten years' course, and made Greek obligatory with fifty week-hours. After the entrance of Johannes Schulze into the education department in 1818 Latin was again gradually advanced to first place. A plan of supplementary reading followed in the *Gymnasium* of Dantsic was officially recommended to all directors, the time of mathematics being soon afterwards reduced a half in order to make it possible. In this way the schools were able to read the following works: "the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, several dramas of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, four books of Herodotus, two books of Thucydides, the *Anabasis*, several of Plutarch's *Lives*, Demosthenes' *Oration on the Crown*, Plato's *Phædo*, all of Vergil except the *Georgics*, Horace complete, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* complete, and selections from other poets, Cæsar's *Gallic War* and *Civil War* complete, five or six books of Livy, all of Sallust, Tacitus' *Annals*, many of Cicero's *Orations*, and *de amicitia, de senectute, de officiis, de divinatione* and *de natura deorum*." The speaking of Latin, which was in common use in the schools at the beginning of the century, gradually fell into disuse. In 1834, however, it was ordered that the final examination in Latin should be conducted in Latin.

In response to a popular demand that the gymnasial requirements should be reduced, a new programme was announced in 1837, according to which the seven lower classes had each ten hours of Latin a week, and the two upper classes eight each—total, eighty-six week-hours. Greek was taught during seven years six hours a week. Pupils were not admitted to the *Gymnasien* until ten years of age. The prescribed number of weekly lessons—in all thirty-two—was under no condition to be increased, and compulsory private reading was abolished. The

programme of 1856 emphasized still more strongly the formal side of classical training. Four to six Latin essays were required each semester. Greek prose composition was included in the final examination. The oral test in both Greek and Latin was to be conducted in Latin. German literature, French, natural science and philosophy were omitted entirely from the final examination. Until the founding of the German Empire Latin was the main part of the gymnasial course; everything was subsidiary to the classics. The aim was to afford a formal training without any regard whatsoever to the pupil's future position in life. A thorough knowledge of Latin, ability to read, write and speak it with ease, was the one thing necessary.

In the seventies forces which had long been dormant or held in check began to be felt. The needs of a great nation made new demands on the educational system. Baden and Hesse were the first to respond by giving more time to science, mathematics, German and French at the expense of the classics. The literature was made the central point of the work in Greek and Latin. The Prussian programme of 1882 reduced the week hours of Latin from eighty-six to seventy-seven and postponed the beginning of Greek to *Untertertia* with a total of forty week-hours. The literature was mildly emphasized, but much stress was still put upon the writing of correct Latin. The formal educational value of Latin was specially recognized in the transformation of certain *Real*-schools into *Realgymnasien*, i. e., *Gymnasien* without Greek. During the succeeding decade two important tendencies became more strongly developed: (1) the modern side of education was evidently growing in public favor, stimulated by rapidly increasing industrial needs; and (2) in the reaction against formalism in the teaching of the classics the revival of new humanistic ideals was becoming more apparent. The reforms of 1892 were, indeed, radical. Emphasis was placed upon the need of a national education in practical lines as distinguished from the theoretical training of the mental faculties. A patriotic citizenship became the chief end of all school work.

Vigor of mind and right conduct are conditioned by health of body; physical exercise, therefore, was encouraged, and all undue pressure in school work prohibited. The national history and literature were given a prominent place, classics were set back. Prussia reduced the week-hours in Latin from 77 to 62 and in Greek from 40 to 36. Bavaria placed Latin at 66 and Greek at 36. Both Saxony and Württemberg made reductions, but the hours still remain much above the average, viz., Saxony, Latin, 71-73, and Greek, 40-42; Württemberg, Latin, 81, and Greek, 40 (classes II-X). The most significant general change was in the emphasis put upon the literature and its humanistic content. Formal drill in grammar and the Latin essay were abolished. "Take warning!" says an opponent of the reforms, "nothing but financial considerations keeps the schools from having veritable museums of classic art. They would apparently make the literature a basis for applied archæology and the essential subject in a course in art history."

The trend of the opposition to the formal educational value of classical study was clearly manifest, too, in the attempted overthrow of the *Realgymnasien*—an abortive attempt, to be sure, but nevertheless indicative of the reaction against formalism and of the increasing importance of practical education. While Latin is still retained in the Prussian *Realgymnasium*, its efficiency is endangered by the manifest hostility of the government. Students no longer feel that Latin is of supreme importance in the final examination, and numerous petty official acts show all too clearly that the authorities do not consider the Latin instruction in the *Realgymnasium* of much account. In fact one can find very little spirited Latin work in these schools. The attitude of the government may be largely responsible for the results, yet there is another not unimportant reason. The Latin teachers are as a rule elderly men. They belong to a generation which looked upon the study of the classics purely as a formal discipline, and notwithstanding the fact that they find themselves in a modern environment, it is with great difficulty that they adjust them-

selves to the practical needs of the *Realgymnasien*. Furthermore one often hears it said that the less promising candidates for teacher's positions are "steered" into the *Realgymnasien*.¹ At any rate an influential *Gymnasium* not infrequently finds a means of having an undesirable member of its staff transferred to some less favored school. The relatively large number of *Realgymnasial* teachers who once held posts in *Gymnasien* suggests that the *Realgymnasium* is the chief sufferer.

Were it not for the far-reaching system of privileges connected with graduation from classical schools, Latin would speedily disappear, no doubt, from the *Realgymnasien*. But as long as admission to higher courses in the university and appointment to the better places in the civil service are conditioned by the study of Latin, so long will the ambitious spirit of the German middle classes insist on the retention of the *Realgymnasium* at any cost. And, besides, there are such men as Professor Paulsen, of Berlin, who maintain that a knowledge of the Latin language is an essential element in a practical education,—that the man, as Schopenhauer says, who knows not the influences of Rome on our modern civilization is like a traveler in a beautiful country enveloped in a dense fog. Merely as an information subject, therefore, Latin deserves a place in every school that leads to the university and to the higher positions in the state.

What the outcome will be of all this discussion cannot be predicted. This much at least seems assured, that the middle classes will insist on a fair representation in the government and in the civil and military service; if Latin is a *conditio sine qua non* then Latin will be kept in the higher schools; if the training of the *Oberrealschulen* is considered sufficient for all purposes, save for entrance upon certain lines of professional study, then we may expect the gradual extinction of the *Realgymnasien*. In short it would seem that the future of classical study were more depend-

¹ In Germany every certificated teacher is certain of an appointment to some school. Lists of available teachers are kept in each province and appointments to posts in royal schools are made according to seniority as determined by the official lists. Good teachers must often wait six or eight years.

ent upon social ideals and economic conditions than has hitherto been the case. It is not in accord with German imperialism to concede much to the demands of the industrial classes, but the time is not far distant when certain new and rapidly increasing forces in the German social life must be recognized. And when that time comes it will bring with it greater reforms in the school system than we have yet seen.

A significant movement looking to a compromise between the factions warring over the place of classical study in liberal education is that for the *Einheitschule*. One of the severest charges brought against the old *Gymnasien* is that parents must practically decide the future career of their sons when first they are sent to school. What father knows the bent of his son at nine years of age? How can he intelligently mark out a course of study before he knows anything of the boy's aptitude in studies? Not long since I heard a prominent physician of Leipzig enter a most emphatic protest to an assembly of teachers against the responsibility placed on him in the selection of a course of study for his nine-year-old boy. "I have carefully studied the child," said the father, "since his birth but I feel that I am in no position to decide the matter. The boy himself is uncertain whether he wishes to become a street-car conductor or a general in the army." The gymnasial pupil at fifteen is debarred from choosing a technical profession; the *Real*-school boy at fifteen finds it a thorny road that leads to the university. There are, indeed, a few notable exceptions to the rule, but the obstacles which the few succeed in overcoming suffice to dissuade the many from the attempt.

For several years Director Schlee, of Altona, has had royal permission to begin the course in his *Realgymnasium* with French instead of Latin and later on to give to Latin some of the time that would ordinarily go to French. In this way the curriculum for the first three years is made to accord with that of the *Real-schule*. Pupils, therefore, can pass easily from one school to the other so late as *Untertertia*. At fifteen years of age a pupil would have no greater difficulty in making a change than at

twelve under the old plan. The success of the Altona experiment was so marked that at Easter, 1892, the plan in a slightly modified form was introduced into all the higher schools of Frankfort-on-the-Main. Latin is begun in the *Gymnasium* in *Untertertia* with ten hours a week. The total week-hours for the six years' course amount to 52. Greek is begun two years later with eight hours a week—an allotment that is maintained during the four years. In the *Realgymnasium* English takes the place of Greek. In other respects there is no great divergence from the governmental programme.

The Frankfort plan is vigorously championed by a party of reformers not only for its practical advantages but for pedagogical reasons as well. They claim that the only rational method of teaching language to children of nine and ten years of age is the inductive, all the time using the language so far as possible as if it were the mother tongue. Habits of speech, rather than thought and judgment, should be the chief aim at first. Latin was once so taught because Latin was then a popular tongue. Times have changed and it is now little short of farcical to insist on treating Latin as a spoken language. Still it is recognized that a humanistic training is desirable. Some language should be begun when a child enters school. It should be a living language. French, therefore, satisfies the theoretical conditions and besides has a practical value that commends it to the German people. The training in French during the first three years of schooling should lay such a foundation, should cultivate such linguistic sensibility, that better work can be done in Latin in the succeeding six years than has formerly been possible in the full nine years' course.

Here then is an attempt at sailing a middle course between the old order and the new. If it succeeds it will be proclaimed a rational solution of a difficult problem. Whether as a compromise—for that is really what it is—it will please either party, will depend largely upon the outcome of the more radical plans now being urged. If the Frankfort plan fails it is safe to say that the fault will not lie with Director Reinhardt and his associ-

ates who have entered upon the work with unbounded faith in its possibilities and who are eminently qualified in every way to realize its highest ideals. The experiment in Frankfort will be watched with increasing interest for five years to come. In 1901 the first class to make the trial will be graduated; the attainments of this class will have an important influence in shaping the future curriculum for the German higher schools.

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